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AUTHOR	Carlos, Lisa; Kirst, Mike
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ABSTRACT

This case study traces the evolution of curriculum-related educational reforms in California, concentrating on those that have influenced mathematics and science. These reform efforts are examined in the framework of the state's political and policy context. Data came from interviews, a synthesis of the research literature, and newspaper accounts of events. Over 20 people were interviewed to describe the evolution of curriculum and policy. For more than a decade, California has been considered a leader in curriculum reform, and by the 1990s, the state had developed frameworks in all core subject areas. These frameworks passed through several versions, with particular controversy associated with the language arts framework. The language arts framework was not associated with improved reading achievement and was characterized in the public mind as an expensive experiment. Similar concerns were expressed about the mathematics framework, but science reform has largely stayed out of the limelight of controversy. Parallel to the backlash to the frameworks has been a backlash to performance-based assessment in California, as evidenced by the dissatisfaction with the California Learning Assessment System. Public concerns about professional development and other educational policies have also threatened the promising start California made in the 1980s. Political changes have splintered state leadership and policy direction, until the comprehensive curriculum-driven reform movement is at a crossroads. (Contains 35 references.) (SLD)

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CALIFORNIA CURRICULUM POLICY IN THE 1990'S: "WE DON'T HAVE TO BE IN FRONT TO LEAD"

by

Lisa Carlos
Policy Support and Studies
WestEd, San Francisco

and

Mike Kirst
School of Education
Stanford University

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INTRODUCTION

Case Study Summary

Era of Experimentation. Throughout the '80's, California was considered a leader in break-the-mold education reforms, many of which influenced other states and federal policy. During that time, under the visionary stewardship of State Superintendent Bill Honig, California was one of the first states to develop a curriculum-driven, comprehensive reform strategy, commonly referred to as "systemic reform" (Goertz, Floden and O'Day, 1996; O'Day and Smith, 1993). In addition to broadly outlining standards in core subject matter areas, these frameworks embraced new concepts and pedagogy, such as "higher order thinking," "cooperative learning," and "student-centered meaning."

In 1990, California began developing an ambitious performance-based test, the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) which, among other things, aimed to measure schools' faithfulness to implementing the frameworks, and drive classroom pedagogy away from the drill and practice of a narrow set of skills. To encourage bottom-up implementation of these frameworks, Honig created an infrastructure of professional development networks run by teacher-leaders and universities working closely with schools.

Unforeseen events of the early '90s, however, interrupted and redirected some of these reforms. State revenue continued to decline, and state leadership was preoccupied with ongoing political battles over the budget. At the same time, State Superintendent Honig's combative relationship with the California State Board of Education escalated. The culmination of this tension was an appellate court decision wresting policy authority away from the California Department of Education (CDE) and an allegation of fiscal improprieties ultimately leading to his resignation. Somewhat rudderless, the CDE forged forward quickly with the implementation of CLAS, but was unable to adequately deflect the technical, political, and public relations issues raised when the test was administered in the spring of 1994. In September of that year, the Governor decided that CLAS had gone astray from its original intent and vetoed funding for the program.

Era of Retrenchment. Two months later, in November of 1994, California's Republicans gained control of the state Assembly and joined the newly-elected superintendent, Delaine Eastin, in debating and redirecting California's state education policy. While the notion of systemic reform—an interlocked, set of curriculum, assessment and professional development policies—has not been at issue, the content and pedagogy underlying those policies, and the perceived biases of CDE officials and other education professionals who developed them, have been questioned. Adding fuel to the growing public distrust of state institutions' ability to determine what was best for students, were the abysmal rankings of California students on national reading tests: in

the spring of 1995, California had dropped to a last place tie in reading among the states who participated in NAEP in 1994.[1]

Reeling from the ensuing public criticism to whole language, constructivism, authentic assessment, and other progressive approaches that dominated earlier reforms, state leaders now openly question the prior wisdom of having moved forward so quickly and to such an extreme. Honig and other state officials who originally championed many of these initiatives, agree that the pendulum may have swung too far in one direction, sacrificing phonics, computation and other such basic skills.

The development of state curriculum policy, historically left in the hands of a cadre of state civil servants, teacher-leaders and other state curriculum specialists, is now the territory of newly-elected officials. Since 1995, the legislature has passed a series of curriculum-related initiatives, including the ABC Bills which explicitly require that state-subsidized instructional materials emphasize phonetic and computational skills. Further diminishing the CDE's curriculum role, the legislature has also created a separate commission charged with developing a new set of grade-by-grade subject matter standards and a new assessment program.

Based on the recommendations of two superintendent task forces, a new reading advisory—emphasizing a phonetics-based approaches to literacy—and a new mathematics advisory—emphasizing a balance between basic skills, conceptual understanding and problem solving—were released by the CDE in 1996, as interim guidance, until new standards and frameworks are developed. Although some consensus has been reached, the battle among stakeholders on the content and direction of state curriculum, namely standards, is not over. Some groups continue to push a more back-to-basics agenda, while others want simply to regain some of the equilibrium lost in earlier years, opting to strike a balance between new and more traditional approaches to school reform. Many of these issues are currently being hashed-out among groups who are working to influence decisions that will have to be made by the state's newly legislated standards commission.

Shifting Policy and Political Context of Mathematics and Science. Mathematics, and to a lesser degree science, initiatives have also been affected by this new political climate and the events of the last couple of years. Whereas the early '90's were spent carrying-out one of the key elements of systemic reform—nurturing curriculum networks and building teacher capacity—today's reformers are in limbo, if not engaged in what some characterize as "survival mode." With declining political support for funding at the state and federal level, the future of these publicly-funded networks remains uncertain.

In response, science networks across the state are joining forces to form political coalitions. At stake are efforts to expand project-based science reforms into more elementary schools. Some reform leaders believe science initiatives must now compete

with resources spent on class size reduction and a series of new literacy initiatives that emphasize phonetic-based instruction.

Proponents of mathematics reforms, meanwhile, are struggling to find common ground among a growing and vocal group of critics, including an organized statewide group of parents in the science, engineering and mathematics professions. At issue is whether and how best to balance the teaching of computational skills, mathematics concepts, and real-world applications.

Purpose of Study

This case study traces the evolution of California's curriculum-related reforms, especially those which have influenced mathematics and science, and examines such reforms within the larger framework of the state's shifting political and policy context.[2] Central to this study is the question of what role the CDE played in relation to other state agencies and actors in developing curriculum policies. Although the paper provides some of the historical background on California's reform efforts over the past decade or so, it focuses on those events which occurred during the 1990's.

Our intent was to describe the evolution of state curriculum policy and politics as perceived by state officials, experts and the public. This is not an impact study of local effects. Consequently, there is no attention to how curriculum affects school practice, other than through the perceptions of state policy makers and researchers. These perceptions matter because they may have a significant influence on how and why state policy changed. For example, while this study did not try to determine exactly what caused California's low NAEP scores, if state policy makers perceive that these scores were the result of misguided state policy, then that and other perceptions are crucial to our analysis below.

Finally, while this paper raises important questions about the problems associated with curriculum policy in California, we are not at this point drawing conclusions about how such issues should be addressed. Instead, we chose to highlight those policy recommendations which were mentioned by others during the course of our interviews and analysis of documents.

Methodology

The primary sources of data for this paper include interviews, synthesis of existing literature on California curriculum and systemic reform policies, and newspaper accounts of events. Over twenty people were interviewed, mostly during the summer of 1996, and include current and past officials from the CDE, state board, governor's office, and legislature. Also interviewed were members of the press and experts in higher education

and from policy research firms involved in statewide curriculum and standards efforts in mathematics and science.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

Curriculum Policy

For more than a decade, California has been considered a leader in curriculum reform, namely in the development of state frameworks. By the early '90s, California had developed frameworks in all core subject areas: science, mathematics, English-language arts, history-social science, foreign language, visual and performing arts, health and physical education. Consistent with the history of local control and flexibility, these frameworks were not meant to be prescriptive, but instead meant to serve as a way for the state to articulate a common vision and general guidelines about what students should know and be able to do.

Since the 1980's, these frameworks have gone through several iterations. Common to most subject matter areas is a set of overarching principles, many of which embody constructivist ideas about the way students learn and how best to teach them. As one state CDE publication summarized in 1994:

> The curriculum frameworks describe what educators and professionals in the field (including historians, scientists, and mathematicians) expect k-12 students to learn. Based on national research in education and the specific content area, the frameworks do not detail a day-to-day or week-to-week curriculum for teachers to follow. Rather, they lay a foundation for this type of curriculum development by describing the knowledge and skills expected of all students. Although individual frameworks have been developed for each core subject area, the frameworks have several overarching concepts in common including *critical thinking and conceptual understanding, problem-solving based on real-life problems, meaning-centered rather than memorization-oriented learning opportunities, active learning which makes connections to student's experiences, collaborative learning and interdisciplinary learning* (emphasis added).[3]

CDE officials hoped that over time these frameworks, in combination with thetextbook adoption process, aligned assessments and other policies, would emerge as powerful levers for reform. And, in fact, the frameworks were the cornerstone of many state policies and initiatives. The evaluation criteria used by the state's Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission (Curriculum Commission) -- the agency charged with advising the State Board on textbook adoptions, are, for example, based on the frameworks.[4] The frameworks also served as the basis for selecting test items in the California Assessment Program (CAP), a high-stakes test that published

school-by-school results. With the advent of CLAS in 1991-- a performance-based exam whose test formats are more consistent with the concepts in the frameworks -- expectations were high that the state could finally compel a meaningful reform strategy aimed at the classroom level.

To further their implementation, the state initiated several complementary subject matter and grade level professional development networks in the '80s and early '90s aimed at building the capacity of teachers to translate into practice the concepts embodied in the frameworks. State task force reports and publications associated with these initiatives, such as the *It's Elementary* (1992), *Second to None* (1992), and *Caught in the Middle* (1987), all echoed the principles and pedagogy laid out in the frameworks.

Despite the articulation of a coherent and consistent message from the top, by the mid-'90s, some scholars proclaimed that the promise of systemic reform—widespread impact on classroom practice—had yet to be realized (Cohen and Spillane 1993; Cohen 1990). One explanation for this disconnect in California, and other states, was that the three legs of systemic reform—cutting-edge curriculum frameworks, a sophisticated assessment system and a teacher-network professional development strategy—seldom operated in perfect synchronization (Massel, Kirst, and Hoppe 1996). Moreover, limited resources, uneven pockets of professional development activities, and the time lag between framework development, testing revisions, and textbook adoption were just some of the obstacles cited as standing in the way of California's ability to set a steady course for reform, build capacity, and measure impact.[5]

Language Arts Frameworks. Ironically, the recent debate over the language arts frameworks suggests, however, that at least in the eyes of some politicians and concerned members of the public, curriculum-based systemic reform was indeed making a widespread impact; it was just the wrong kind of impact. From the perspective of these critics, the problem was not whether the message conveyed by curriculum policies had taken hold at the local level, but that the message itself was faulty—i.e. untested by research—or had been misunderstood and misapplied when translated to classroom practice.

When first adopted in 1987, the language arts framework was considered state of the art, emphasizing literature-based instruction and also embracing an approach commonly referred to as "whole language." The framework was popular throughout the early '90s, serving as the cornerstone of state-initiated workshops and university-sponsored professional development activities, such as the California Literature Project, operated by campuses in the California State University system. Given the emphasis on literature in the framework, the State Board decided to break with tradition by deciding to adopt literature selections as instructional materials for language arts, as opposed to only adopting reading textbooks.

The enthusiastic embrace of literature-based language art instruction by some members of the education community, speculate some, may have eclipsed the obvious attention such instruction should have also paid to phonics instruction. Such a phenomenon can best be understood when reflecting on the rhetoric surrounding the frameworks at that time. As one former proponent of "whole language" explained:

> We said, 'How absurd it is to care about individual words and accuracy!' Under whole language, the rule was efficiency of the mind: Get the meaning using the least perception possible. Skip words. Absorb ideas instead. At the time, it sounded great.[6]

Former State Superintendent Bill Honig, and others involved during that time, concede that some balance between phonics and literature-based approaches got lost between drafting the frameworks and translating them into classroom practice: "We were always of the mind that skills were important, but we weren't clear with the message."[7]

In September of 1993, California received its first of several shocks that something was not quite right: the U.S. Department of Education released its results of the 1992 NAEP scores, indicating that the state's performance in reading proficiency ranked near the bottom among states. Almost immediately, experts and state officials pointed to the language issues associated with educating California's large and growing immigrant student population and the lack of state resources to meet their needs as a possible explanation. Others were quick to explain that NAEP did not measure the types of higher-order thinking and other literature-based skills promoted by the frameworks.

But, even so, these explanations did not adequately explain why most students had scored so poorly in basic reading skills. Speculation about what went awry turned inevitably to the language arts framework and specifically to the efficacy of "whole language." A theory emerged that scores were a result of most teachers using such methods promoted in the frameworks. According to a September 23, 1993, EdWeek article:

> One surprise in the [NAEP] study was the low performance of school children in California. That state in 1987 adopted a new framework for language-arts instruction that called for a significant shift from traditional approaches to teaching reading to newer, literature-based approaches. And 87 percent of California teachers, when asked by NAEP, said they had heavily emphasized the new approaches. [8]

After some level of inquiry, the CDE's official response was that the framework "had confused teachers." CDE spokespersons were quoted as saying that teachers had misunderstood the intent of the frameworks, believing that an emphasis on whole language techniques had precluded them from using other methods, such as phonics. [9] Framework strategies that encouraged greater equity, such as avoiding pullout or ability-

based grouping, were also reportedly misinterpreted by teachers to mean that children's instruction could not be individualized and that every child should "be on the same page of the same story at the same time."[10] To rectify the situation, the CDE decided to clarify the framework's intent though directives and supplemental monographs. However, others felt that these documents did not go far enough in directing teachers to use basic skills.[11]

Two years later, in the spring of 1995, California was hit with more bad news. The 1994 CLAS scores were released, again amidst much publicity, indicating low student performance in core subject areas, especially language arts. According to the Sacramento Bee, 77 percent of fourth graders, 61 percent of eighth-graders and 65 percent of tenth graders were unable to read and comprehend at a level considered proficient.[12] Then later that same month, California was dealt a third blow: the 1994 NAEP scores were released, placing the state last among 39 states in performance. The Los Angeles Times reported that "California's white fourth graders' performance on language arts fell seven points from 1992 to 1994."[13]

Finger pointing and political posturing ensued. Some Republican legislators blamed the bureaucracy, calling for "massive decentralization," and deregulation of the education system, while some Democrats seized the opportunity to criticize the Governor for his lack of financial support of public schools.[14] But more significantly, as discussed in detail later on, these NAEP scores triggered an intense inquiry by state officials, eventually leading to a sweeping set of legislative proposals aimed at literacy and basic instruction, unprecedented in the history of the state.

In the end, the language arts framework was characterized as one of California's most costly ventures with cutting-edge reforms. As one long-time lobbyist told the *California Journal*:

> It was the single most-damaging education reform effort in the history of the state...and it may have overwhelmed the good of all the rest. The state should've required scientific evidence that [the framework] worked before subjecting the entire state's student population to this experiment.[15]

Former superintendent Bill Honig admits he was "distracted" when whole language began to take off and was unaware of the extreme to which local educators were implementing it. The end result, he believes, is that students do not know how to read by spelling-out sounds: "When they're asked what's the first sound in 'cat,' they say 'meow,'" he recently told an audience at Stanford's Hoover Institute.[16]

Mathematics Frameworks. Riding on the heels of the language arts controversy, has been another series of attacks aimed at the mathematics frameworks. Prior to the language arts uproar, California's mathematics frameworks were considered exemplars for the rest of the country. In 1992, a revised, groundbreaking mathematics framework

was adopted, adding greater specificity to the state's 1985 framework. This new version reflected the new standards guidelines developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). According to a content analysis (Giganti, 1996), the framework included principles such as: student-, as opposed to teacher-centered classrooms placing responsibility on the student to be an active learner; the use of manipulative material; cooperative learning; and an emphasis on problem solving.

A large, broad-based committee, about half of whom were teachers and already actively engaged in carrying-out the principles of the1985 framework, were involved in the development of the 1992 mathematics framework. Although the inclusion of teachers was meant to help build consensus and support for the frameworks, according to some observers at the state level, the teachers and other professionals who were most vocal and influential in the drafting of the frameworks were all like-minded—an insular group who were already immersed in constructivist principles. While there were dissidents at the table, some say that counter points of view may have been left unsaid because of "peer pressure." Some state officials interviewed believe this is why the 1992 framework emphasized more progressive methods and gave less attention to computational skills. Why the frameworks did not emphasize these types of basic skills remains a matter of debate. But Giganti, (1996) concludes that, as a whole, the framework downplays such skills by implying that they are just one of several skills to which teachers should pay attention.

Growing public objections to the lack of computational skills in the framework percolated to the top in 1994—almost one year after the first wave of controversy was raised about the language arts frameworks. At that time, the state board was preparing to adopt instructional materials for mathematics based on the 1992 framework. The state's Curriculum Commission, an advisory body to the state board and staffed by the CDE, had compiled a list of mathematics instructional materials based on criteria related to the framework. Critics, some of which reportedly included publishers whose materials were not on this list, began to lobby board members to add textbooks that included a stronger emphasis on computational skills.[17] Despite objections by the CDE and concerns by textbook publishers, the State Board was finally persuaded to add another list of instructional materials that emphasized such basic skills.

Then the following year, upon release of the CLAS scores, concerns arose again about students' performance of basic skills in mathematics. Seventy-two percent of fourth-graders, 77 percent of eighth graders and 86 percent of tenth graders performed weakly on computations and problem solving,[18] prompting another round of questions among state leaders and the public. At issue this time were the efficacy of constructivist approaches and "neo-new mathematics" programs. And in March of this year, NAEP scores were released which showed California to be, once again, ranked near the bottom in math performance.

Superintendent's Task Forces on Reading and Mathematics. As a result of the state's performance on these tests and related concerns, newly-elected Superintendent Delaine Eastin appointed two state task forces in the spring of 1995, comprised of researchers, educators, parents, business leaders and members of the Governor's office, to develop new guidelines for reading and mathematics. Upon release of these task force findings, state officials publicly conceded that they had made an "an honest mistake," promoting methods that were not proven practices and had failed to emphasize basic skills.[19]

Non-binding CDE advisories for reading and mathematics have since been issued, outlining for districts what schools should be teaching and how to support classroom implementation of those concepts. Both documents cite extensive research. Unlike the almost figurative language found in earlier CDE curriculum-related documents, the language in these advisories is straightforward, reflecting an almost painstaking effort to avoid misinterpretation and to be precise about the skills that teachers should be using and how they should be used. [Note the differences in language between a 1994 CDE document (cited on page 5) and that found in advisories published below.]

Excerpts from 1996 California CDE of Education Advisories

Reading Advisory - 1996	Mathematics Advisory - 1996
To be complete and balanced and to meet the literacy needs of all students, including English language learners and student with special needs, any early reading program must include the following instructional components: phonemic awareness, letter names and shapes; systematic, explicit phonics; spelling; vocabulary development; comprehension and higher-order thinking; and appropriate instructional materials.	In a balanced mathematics program, students become proficient with basic skills, develop conceptual understanding, and become adept at problem solving. All three areas are important and included—none is neglected or underemphasized. Lessons and assignments that delve deeply into all three aspects will, over time, constitute a balanced program. Balance does not imply that set amount of time be allocated for basic skills, conceptual understanding, and problem solving. At times, students might be involved in lessons or tasks that focus on one aspect, while at other times lessons or tasks may focus on two or all three aspects.

Those involved with the task forces say that reaching consensus has been challenging, especially in mathematics. Sources interviewed say the debate over the mathematics frameworks has revolved around several issues. At one end of the continuum are groups who oppose the NCTM standards, including a group of very vocal parents based in San Diego and Palo Alto, and those who support the NCTM standards,

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on which the 1992 framework is based. A related set of issues focused on the extent to which the existing frameworks were the primary problem: some believed the original framework should remain the same, saying "don't fix it;" others argued the framework was fine, but poorly implemented; and others claimed the framework was inadequate to begin with and needed a complete overhaul. Another issue raised by task force members concerned the type of teaching examples in the original framework, which some members thought were too constructivist in their approach.

As written in the advisory, task force members finally decided to promote a balance to teaching mathematics which includes "basic skills, concept applications and problem solving." Others interviewed, however, say that they remain unsatisfied and are concerned that striking a balance or any form of compromise on basic skills may, once again, diminish the importance of those skills.

ABC Bills. Concurrent with the Superintendent's task force work, the legislature has proposed a series of instructional materials bills, emphasizing basic skills, as its response to the NAEP scores. Long-time state officials consider these new legislative initiatives precedent-setting. In addition to garnering bi-partisan support, they prescribed a level of detail in addressing curriculum and instructional issues that few had ever seen before in the history of the legislature. Also implicit in these bills is the concern that instructional materials be based on research. The two bills, dubbed the "ABC Bills," because of their back-to-basics intent and the last names of their sponsors (Assembly Members Apert, Burton and Conroy) were passed in October of 1995, and read (emphasis added):

- the state board of education "shall ensure that the basic instructional materials that it adopts for mathematics and reading in grades 1 to 8, inclusive, are based on the *fundamental skills* required by these subjects, including, but not limited to, *systematic, explicit phonics, spelling, and basic computational skills*" (AB 170); and

- the state board of education "shall adopt at least five basic instructional materials for all applicable grade levels..." and shall approve such materials on the basis that they are "consistent with the state framework" and are "factually accurate and incorporate principals of instruction *reflective of current and confirmed research.*" (AB 1504).

Literacy and Class Size Initiatives. Building from the groundwork laid by these initiatives, and bolstered by a state revenue windfall, the next legislative session went even further with a literacy and basics agenda. In May of 1996, Committee Chairman Steve Baldwin (R-El Cajon) and Assemblywoman Kerry Mazzoni a (D-Novato) presided over an eight-hour hearing devoted solely to reading pedagogy and policy. During this hearing concerns were raised about how state curriculum policies had led teachers astray from teaching basic skills. The outcome of this hearing was the passage of a sweeping set of legislation aimed at improving literacy and reducing class size in the primary grades. Three bills, AB 3482, AB 3075, and AB 1178, authorize several complementary

programs to support the purchase of instructional materials for K-3, teacher training and the use of federal "Goals 2000" funds for such programs. In addition, the state passed close to a billion dollars to support a 20-1 class size initiative and facilities program (SB 1414 and SB 1789) for grades k-3, those grades considered crucial to improving literacy.

Consensus on Reading Reform. The good news about the crisis surrounding language arts, according to some state officials, is that state leaders have found concurrence around a common cause and reform agenda: improving literacy. While there still may be disagreements around how best to approach language arts, there is enough consensus to create a critical mass of state and federal funds going into primary grades aimed at reading instruction. The biggest effort to that end is a three-quarter billion dollar state aid increase to reduce class size from an average of 30 to 20 in grades K-3. Governor Wilson believes that class size reduction is one part of an overall reading initiative that will be reinforced through increased state professional development dollars and Federal Goals 2000 and Improving America's School Act dollars.

New, More Specific, Standards Underway. There is also consensus that, at least for accountability purposes developing an aligned statewide standards and assessment system is a high priority. Toward that end, in 1995, the legislature passed a comprehensive standards and testing bill, AB 265, called the California Assessment and Academic Achievement Act. This bill is significant for several reasons.

First, it reconfigures the decision-making hierarchy in curriculum policy making. Existing agencies charged with some role in curriculum formerly included: 1) the state board—constitutionally mandated to approve frameworks, textbooks and guidelines; 2) the Curriculum Commission, essentially an agency housed within the CDE charged with reviewing instructional material to recommend to the board for adoption, and 3) those other units within the CDE who are currently developing standards as part of Supertendent Eastin's Challenge Program and other divisions which oversee the framework revision process. With the passage of AB265 another "check" in the curriculum development process was created--an independent state agency at the state level. Specifically, AB 265 establishes a 21-member advisory body, called the Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards. Members to the commission have been appointed by the governor and legislature; and the state superintendent is also a member. That commission currently presides over the development of grade-by-grade standards in core subject areas and, eventually, an aligned assessment program. Although originally the commission was to have developed standards by summer of 1997, and an assessment system two years later, that time line will probably be extended at least a year. Also enacted is a statewide Pupil Assessment Panel to review tests to be used by districts until the commission develops a statewide assessment tied to standards. While these standards and assessments must still be approved by the state board, the creation of these additional advisory bodies reflects the CDE's increasingly diminished role—one which stems from its handling of CLAS and the language arts frameworks.

Another significant impact of AB265 is that it represents a policy return to grade - by-grade standards, an approach similar to the policies of the 70's and early '80s. When the frameworks were first created, the predominant thinking was that districts and schools would fill in the details, turning them into day-to-day lesson plans. But today state policy makers believe that the frameworks were too vague, making it difficult for schools to determine "the bottom line" that is, the standards they were expected to meet and be tested on. By being more explicit, these standards are supposed to be more fair. Schools and students will know, in theory, exactly what is expected of them in terms of performance. According to one state department official, such specific standards will lead to greater accountability even though they remain voluntary: "There will be a little more peer pressure to look at state standards and compare—but never a requirement to do that, however."

Finally, another redirection of policy is the approach to testing—reintroducing the use of standardized, multiple choice tests. The law creates a statewide "pupil testing incentive program," as an interim to the Commission's development of a new assessment system, granting districts five dollars per participating student. (This new policy is discussed in more detail in the assessment section below.)

Science Framework. Science, for the most part, has stayed out of the limelight of controversy, much to the relief of reform leaders in this area. In 1996, the existing science framework was approved unanimously for four more years by the state board. The framework, which is consistent with the National Science Education Standards, is fairly detailed and describes benchmarks of what students should learn in four grade spans: K-3, 3-6, 6-9 and 9-12. Although state officials claim that the reason the framework did not need any further revision was because they "set the standard for other frameworks," another explanation may have been to avoid revisiting the debate on creationism and evolution that had arisen during the drafting of the 1990 framework (Atkin et. al.1996; Sneider 1996). Accordingly, cautionary language in the very front of the framework makes the point in several ways that "a teacher's role is to foster understanding, not to compel belief."[20]

First adopted in 1990, the science framework embraces the notion of "scientific literacy for all students" and the use of practical, real-life applications. The framework also promotes interdisciplinary approaches to learning content, integrating biology, earth science, and physical sciences in order to illustrate the underlying concepts common to each field. A recent case study (Atkin et. al. 1996) on the history of the framework reveals that its original intent was to serve as a corrective measure, i.e., to discourage science from being taught as a "compendium of facts." Instead, the framework was designed to promote the teaching of science ideas. As such, the framework encourages depth of coverage, over breadth of coverage and is organized thematically around six categories: energy, evolution, patterns of change, scale and structure, stability and systems, and interactions.

Despite the board's stamp of approval for the new framework, supporters remain wary of the potential "guilt-by-association-effect" that may stem from the new political coalitions that have formed to scrutinize language arts and mathematics. One interviewee mentioned "whole language science" as a potential symbol for science frameworks opponents. In response, teacher leaders and other members of professional development science networks have formed a group called Science Educators Advisory Committee (SEAC) to ward off any potential criticism and to influence the direction of new standards at the state level.

The impetus for the group's formation stemmed from wanting to improve the draft science standards produced as part of Superintendent Eastin's Challenge Program. The Challenge Program, one of Eastin's first reform initiatives, was originally designed to create standards-driven reform by exchanging greater flexibility to districts in return for being held accountable for certain standards and other non-academic outcomes. While Challenge standards, however, are now in competition with the new standards which are being developed by the AB 265 Standards and Assessment Commission. Accordingly, SEAC is now focusing its efforts on developing standards that they hope both the CDE and the new commission will find acceptable.

Assessment Policy

Parallel to the backlash to California's frameworks, has been a backlash to performance-based assessment. Throughout the last decade, California's assessment system was considered ahead of the curve. But the state's most recent experience with performance-based assessment has led some state officials to conclude that pursuing this course may have been attempting to do too much, too soon. One state official captured a sentiment echoed by others:

> During the Honig era there was a real coherent strategy which included textbook reform, curriculum reform, and a well-articulated message, but what happened was that it was too leading edge in the assessment area.

Implementing a cost-effective, reliable and valid statewide assessment system that is tied to rigorous statewide standards, but does not drive instruction in rudimentary and parallel ways, continues to be an elusive goal, not only for California but the rest of the nation as well.

CAP. California's first significant statewide assessment system, The California Assessment Program (CAP), originally authorized during the post-Sputnik era in 1972, had some good and bad points. Characterized as a fairly conservative test that relied on multiple choice formats and a matrix sampling design, the primary purpose of this state-developed system was to measure effectiveness of schools and districts, not the individual

progress of students (Honig and Alexander, 1996). The test could not provide individual test scores and was not considered an effective instructional guidance tool for teachers largely because it was not well-aligned with the state's frameworks. Efforts to further refine the test and address these problems, however, came to a standstill, in 1990. At that time, the then-Governor Deukmejian, supposedly upset by a rumor that Superintendent Honig was going to run for governor, eliminated funding for the CAP program.[21]

CLAS. In 1991, the CDE began work on another ambitious test—the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS). This test included both traditional and non-traditional testing formats and methods (e.g. curriculum embedded tasks and portfolios). The test, whose development was spearheaded by the CDE and reviewed by a committee of local educators, state officials, and other professional educators, was designed not only for accountability purposes, but also to inform and drive instruction at the classroom level in a way that was consistent with the frameworks. Many hoped that this test would serve as not only a way to measure student progress, but also as a professional development tool for teachers. Another purpose of the test was to provide parents with individual scores to assist them in tracking their children's progress. Specifically, the legislative intent of CLAS, according to SB 662, was:

- to develop a system for producing valid, reliable individual student scores,
- to develop and implement statewide performance standards of student achievement as the basis for reporting all tests results and setting targets for improvement,
- to provide test results based on performance levels comparable to those used to report national test outcomes,
- to develop end-of-course examinations in major subject areas in middle and high school,
- to reduce reliance on multiple-choice tests and increase the use of performance-based assessment aligned with the curriculum frameworks adopted by the State Board of Education,
- to work with staff development providers to improve classroom instruction by training teachers in the use of performance-based testing; and
- to work with national testing firms to ensure availability of tests for all grade levels that are aligned with the state curriculum frameworks and consistent in format with the state testing program.

Inevitably, the combined pressures of this complex, if not contradictory, set of purposes for the test, the short development time frame mandated by policy makers, and limited financial resources, forced expedient choices and, in some cases, mistakes (Honig and Alexander 1996; Mazzeo and Kirst 1996).

One significant miscalculation was the backlash from certain groups of parents and the public (e.g. conservative and religious coalitions) whose perspectives were not

included in the committees who developed and piloted CLAS. Bill Honig and Francie Alexander (1996) point to this lesson learned from CLAS:

> As a part of this consensus building, the architects of public programs as innovative as the California Learning and Assessment System (CLAS) have to guard against self-enclosed certainty. For instance, the CLAS designers and committees developed a clear and articulate view of literacy as personal meaning-making. It is a view of language use backed up by considerable contemporary theory if not by conclusive research, but it lent CLAS items a very particular stamp. It led to writing that was largely personal and narrative.

The risks of developing a test with such "self-enclosed certainty" became apparent after the administration of the test in the spring of 1994. Groups of parents who had concerns about the personal and value-laden nature of the literature test items demanded to see the test. The CDE's choice to keep the test items confidential only served to fuel suspicions about the state's motivation. Rumors spread among parents and members of conservative religious groups, and some districts threatened not to participate. In response, Senator Gary Hart introduced a CLAS reauthorization bill (SB 1273) in January of 1994, which included a requirement that a broader-based panel review future tests and that the prior year's test items be made public.

Then a few months later that spring, the 1993 CLAS scores were released inciting another wave of criticism. Not only were the test results alarmingly low overall, but some of the schools in the wealthier districts had scored lower than on other previous tests, raising significant concerns about the technical accuracy of the tests (Mazzeo and Kirst, 1996). There were also concerns raised about scoring and sampling. Finally, a report commissioned by the CDE, and headed by Stanford Professor Lee Cronbach, determined that the technical quality of the test, including its reliability and standard error rate, was questionable and recommended that future school level tests be administered on an experimental basis (Mazzeo and Kirst, 1996).

In September 1994, Governor Wilson, citing the report, announced he would veto funds for SB 1273, Hart's reauthorization bill. Not only was the test design flawed, but officials in the governor's office believed that Hart's new bill had veered away from the original bill which created CLAS. The governor's office claimed that this new version had eliminated references to the reporting of individual scores and had placed a greater priority on the performance-based aspects of the test, and not enough on basic skills.

Pupil Testing Incentive Program (AB 265). Taking into consideration these lessons learned, the state has embarked on a new statewide testing program, the Pupil Testing Incentive Program, far more conservative in approach than its predecessor. The program, attached to a comprehensive standards and assessment revision bill, AB 265 which was passed in 1995, has two phases: the implementation of an interim testing program which will eventually be replaced by a new statewide test tied to new standards.

This interim testing program provides five dollars per student in incentive funding for districts who choose to administer tests selected from a roster of tests approved by the state board. The selection criteria for approved tests are reliability and comparability.

But, according to some state officials, test publishers argued that it was virtually impossible to identify tests that were genuinely comparable. So the state board, to the dismay of some, selected 100 or so tests, but decided to postpone the issue of comparability until this spring when they will review this list again. CDE officials estimate that about 50 percent of districts statewide now participate in this testing incentive program.

The second phase of the testing program will occur after the new commission develops standards. At that time a test will be implemented over the course of several years in core subject matter areas in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10.

Professional Development Policy

Teacher networks has been one of the state's primary professional development strategies. Throughout the 80's the state relied on a series of university-run, Subject Matter Projects (SMPs) to build teacher capacity to implement the pedagogy and content of the frameworks. These projects included 4-6 week summer training institutes where teachers learned about and developed new curriculum projects and ongoing peer-support networks of teachers who have gone through the training. These teacher leaders, in turn, are supposed to be instructional mentors in their respective schools, modeling and implementing new curriculum units. Honig and others considered the SMPs as pivotal to the implementation of curriculum framework concepts to the local level. Some of the first SMPs created were in mathematics and science, such as the California Mathematics Project and The California Science Project.

In 1988, the legislature passed SB 1883, a bill that strategically moved funding for professional development away from districts and into the hands of universities and county offices. The idea was to remove district influence and, instead, encourage site-based collegiality and self-inquiry (Kirst and Yee, 1994). Although a relatively small initiative (about 2 percent of all teachers had participated in an SMP), by 1994, SMP's existed in 11 curriculum areas and were located in nearly 90 sites throughout the state (O'Day, 1994).

Another complementary set of professional development initiatives was aimed at empowering teachers with the authority, skills and knowledge to become instructional leaders in their schools. SB 813, the comprehensive reform legislation passed in 1983, included a School Improvement Program (SIP) which was supposed to encourage teacher and community input in school decisions. Believing that this initiative did not go far enough the legislature passed SB 1274, in 1988, a school restructuring initiative that

provided schools with planning grants to rethink their governance and organizational structures. This initiative focused on altering decision-making relationships within schools and encouraged schools to engage in change processes. Also established at this time were a series of state-sponsored grade-level reform networks, which were a spin-off activity of the CDE's grade level task force reports promoting the restructuring of elementary, middle and secondary schools.

CAMS. In spring of 1991, the state received a five-year, 10 million dollar Statewide Systemic Initiative (SSI) grant. California's project, called the California Advocacy For Mathematics and Science (CAMS), was a joint project of the Governor's Office of Child Development and Education and the CDE. As with other teacher networks, the strategy behind CAMS was to build a bottom-up initiative to build teacher capacity to implement the frameworks. But that did not mean that the CDE did not play a vital role in supporting these networks. Indeed, those involved with CAMS say that, during this time, Honig and CDE curriculum specialists played a vital leadership and behind-the-scenes role in creating this infrastructure and lobbying for public funds.

The specific purpose of CAMS was to coordinate the expansion of two pre-existing state professional development networks (funded in part by federal Eisenhower Mathematics and Science grants). This initiative had four major components: 1) a public engagement initiative, called "Galvanizing Public Support;" 2) a Mathematics Renaissance initiative, a network aimed at replacing traditional computation and drill curriculum with new framework-based lesson units for middle schools; 3) the California Science Implementation Network (CSIN); and 4) a research and evaluation component.

Observers say that the first component on public engagement faltered initially due to staffing issues and unclear goals. But the other two components have continued to progress. According to an evaluation of the SSI initiative in California (Shields, Corcoran, and Zucker, 1994), 660 teachers, 242 middle schools (of approximately 1,000 in the state) were participating in Mathematics Renaissance in 1993. CSIN, meanwhile, reached about 1,500 teachers through the efforts of 11 full-time teaching consultants and 120 staff. A later study (Atkin et. al., 1996) on CSIN found that not only were the networks serving as an effective vehicle for promoting teacher discourse and critical inquiry about how best to teach science concepts in the frameworks, but they were also training teachers and administrators on valuable skills in schoolwide restructuring processes and on other ways to work with structural and emotional barriers to change.

While grass-roots support for mathematics and science professional development initiatives continued to grow throughout the 90's, state revenue was scarce and these science and mathematics networks were cut back or level funded. In some cases, network leaders were able to supplement their existing federal and state resources with individual school contracts. Shaky federal funding and the recent backlash to the frameworks, especially in mathematics, however, has also contributed to the networks' more vulnerable position. Furthermore, Honig's departure and the downsizing and

reorganization of the CDE, in the eyes of some, has created a leadership vacuum at the CDE, leaving virtually no one at the state level to champion their cause.

Officials involved with this initiative also believe that one critical strand of work, the "public engagement" piece, originally intended to build a ground swell of support for state mathematics and science reforms, never really got off the ground for various reasons, most of which had to do with its original staffing and use of advertising consultants. Others pointed out that the curriculum improvement networks rely on Eisenhower and other federal competitive grants to continue operating at such a large scale. They also need support from State Superintendent Eastin in terms of funding and CDE staffing priority.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Governance Structure and Locus of Control

California's recent struggle in carrying out a continuous and coherent education reform agenda can be attributed largely to a fractured governance structure and the partisan conflicts and alliances that arise with each election. The state superintendent, who is elected, is also the executive officer of the state board, but must get approval for any curriculum-related policy from the state board. The governor appoints the state board. The governor, meanwhile, has authority over the budget, except when otherwise directed by the legislature. The state board, has no day-to-day control over the actions of the CDE, but approves policy drafted and carried out by the CDE. The legislature, meanwhile, can mandate, but has traditionally charged the superintendent with carrying-out and regulating such laws.

In short, no single entity or individual at the state has the authority to set the course for education reform, carry it out, and alter its course when something goes wrong. The lack of a single entity at the state level accountable for education and disruptive partisan maneuvering in the last decade or so, has led some to suggest that the only solution is to eliminate an elected position for the superintendent. Such a change would vest ownership for shaping and carrying-out an education agenda firmly in the hands of the governor. Several state officials, from both ends of the political spectrum, suggested that the governor appoint the superintendent. As one legislator put it: "no one's ever heard of electing the U.S. Secretary of Education." A similar recommendation was made in 1996 by the legislatively-created Constitutional Revision Commission, enacted to examine statewide governance and fiscal structures, but legislative proposals to that effect have not gone very far.

Declining Role of the CDE

The CDE, or more precisely—the State Superintendent of Public Instruction—is charged by the legislature with regulating and implementing the state-funded education programs. But for the most part, the Superintendent's position is that of a bully pulpit—shaping a compelling message, rallying forces, and keeping critics at bay.

Honig Era. Many agree that Bill Honig knew how to capitalize what little policymaking leverage his position offered because he understood all the pieces of the larger system in which he operated and how these pieces interacted. Honig understood, for example, as one person explained: "CDE was not his legacy, so he exported his initiatives." Accordingly, Honig recognized that genuine reform would have to be fostered from the bottom-up; therefore, he supported the expansion of an infrastructure of professional development networks, run by higher education institutions, and led by teachers.

To further his curriculum objectives, Honig made structural changes to the CDE, reorganizing staff units around subject matter areas. Under his predecessor, Wilson Riles, the CDE was organized by special needs students and categorical programs aimed at serving such populations, e.g. Title 1, Migrant Education, and Special Education. CDE involvement in curricular matters during that time was purposefully minimal. As one CDE employee at that time recalls Riles saying: "Our job is to get money to the schools and to leave curriculum to the locals."

In the 80's, however, curriculum became the centerpiece of CDE's systemic reform strategies. To build further support and provide professional development opportunities around state curriculum policies, the CDE worked collaboratively with cross-sections of state and local curriculum specialists and teacher-leaders in the development of the frameworks. During this period, the CDE was viewed as an expert institution with the professional capacity for leading such state-level curriculum efforts. With rare exception, the state board approved curriculum policies put forward to them by the CDE. In fact, under Honig's reign, the state board agenda and decision-making docket was largely determined by CDE staff and the board often deferred to their policy recommendations.

By the early 90's, the CDE's glory days were quickly coming to an end. Both the Board and the Governor became disenchanted with Honig and critical of the CDE's policy-making role. Honig's battles with state board president Joe Carrabino eventually led to a law suit filed by the board challenging the CDE's policy authority and allegations about his fiscal improprieties. These issues distracted him, say observers, at a critical juncture for the CDE, i.e., just at a time when the CDE was beginning to develop CLAS.

Dawson Era. After Honig's resignation in 1993, David Dawson, a well-liked former CDE deputy, served as Acting Director, but the CDE was left without a strong spokesperson at a critical time. As one staff person described:

> When Honig first left, there was a confused period. [Dawson's] strategy was not to get into trouble. This meant that the assistant superintendents had very long reins, but no real policy guidance; back then they relied on Honig's vision with a lot of guidance.

During Dawson's short tenure, the superintendency role shifted from proactive to reactionary mode, operating under a "siege mentality," as described by one observer. Within a year of assuming his position, Dawson was left to defend the fall-out from his predecessor's reforms, e.g. the outcry to CLAS and the language arts frameworks due to the release of the 1992 NAEP scores.

By 1995, the CDE's legitimacy was in question on several fronts. First, although many agreed that CLAS as enacted was complex, the perception remained that the CDE did not have the capacity to oversee such a technically-sophisticated endeavor. Moreover, state officials questioned the CDE's objectivity, believing staff had chosen to focus on the performance-based parts of the test at the expense of developing a system that could accurately provide individual test scores. The CDE was also viewed, by some, as having relied too much on input from a group of teachers and curriculum specialists who participated in the subject matter projects and networks and were, therefore, already inclined toward a certain ideological and pedagogical direction. Finally, the CDE faced criticism for pursuing reforms which lacked a strong "research base." Whereas in the past, state officials had relied on the CDE's professional expertise and ability to objectively determine what constituted best practice, some of those same officials believe that they were misled, namely that the CDE had promoted reforms that were highly-experimental, primarily theoretical and untested by research.

Eastin Era. Delaine Eastin, the chair of the Assembly Education Committee, was elected as State Superintendent in 1994 (and defeated Maureen DiMarco, Governor Wilson's Secretary for Education and Child Development). Working against her, has been an increasingly smaller operating budget; in the last six years the CDE has lost nearly 50% of its staff, leaving the CDE, until very recently, with just one mathematics and science specialist.[22] For the past several years the Governor's budget proposal has recommended a 15-20% cut and "with those kinds of cuts, you don't always do them strategically," remarked one official. Not only does she have less resources with which to work, but she less fiscal autonomy then Honig and must now pass all budget items through the Department of Finance.

Another of Eastin's hurdles was dealing with a perception held by others across the state that the CDE was, as one person described "too outrageous" in its policies and had failed to promote research-based reforms. As a legislator during the early '90s, Eastin had first hand knowledge of these credibility issues facing the CDE and spent her first few months trying to gain back ground lost during those earlier years. Reportedly, part of her initial strategy was to weed out people who were "old versus new culture." For

example, some staff who had been integrally involved with the more controversial initiatives were relocated, sometimes into positions outside of their expertise in curriculum and assessment, report some staff.

Eastin also relayed a new message to staff about the CDE's policy direction, reportedly stating: "We don't have to be out there to make change." Another staff member described this new atmosphere: "now there is a pulling back and a feeling of not being too far out there." While the "old culture versus new culture" approach to reorganization caused some initial tension, other officials agree that the CDE was better off in playing a "wait-and-see role," instead of being at the forefront of reform efforts. They also say that the superintendent has used her leadership to effectively mediate common ground among divergent interest groups, especially those involved with the reading and mathematics task forces.

Similar to other states, the CDE's reorganization has focused on creating a more client-centered and service-oriented agency. Its Curriculum and Instructional Leadership Branch is now split into grade-level divisions—elementary, middle and high school. Each of these grade level teams include curriculum specialists in core subject matter areas (e.g. reading, mathematics, science), categorical program specialists (e.g. Title 1, Migrant, Bilingual and Gate), and teacher training specialists. A CDE announcement of the reorganization (August, 1995) claims that these teams "will work together much like a school principal would with the resources available to him or her..." Another division is the District and School Support Division (e.g. research and development, restructuring, etc.) and the Student Performance Division that includes standards and assessment programs, such as the Golden State Exam.

Concerns that this reorganization may have marginalized curriculum issues have been assuaged to some extent this past year. Curriculum specialists have been hired and moved from the three grade level divisions in the Curriculum and Instructional Leadership Branch to the standards division.

Rising Role of the State Board

Throughout most of the 1980's the board's packed docket of decision items meant that time was primarily spent making administrative decisions, such as focusing on the approval of waivers, as opposed to engaging in-depth, substantive discussions or hearing on complex policy issues. When such longer discussions have occurred, they are usually crisis-driven, (e.g. creationism). State officials claim that during this time the CDE discouraged the board to pursue too many positions on pending legislative proposals. For the most part, the board was also dependent on the CDE for administrative support because it was so understaffed. The CDE had much more free reign during this time. As one staff member recalled: "In the old days, Honig would just

issue an advisory, but now you have to run everything through the board."

By 1990, however, the state board became more proactive as tensions between the Governor, the Board and Honig grew. Some of this tension, say observers, was due to personality conflicts, while some of it was due to a lack of clarity in the law about the delegation of powers among agencies. In September of that year, Joe Carrabino, the President of the board, complained to the press that the Superintendent treated them like an "advisory board" and escalated the feud by demanding greater oversight over the CDE's budget and review of all policy directives, referred to as "underground regulations."[23]

Honig refused to comply with the request on state constitutional and other legal grounds. In response, the Board decided to sue. Since the board was technically staffed by and considered a part of the CDE, the board was supposed to use the same general counsel as the defense, Superintendent Honig. One person pointed to this situation as just one other example of the murkiness in the delegation of powers between the two entities. After protesting the situation, the Attorney General agreed the board could seek outside counsel. As a result of that suit, the 3rd Appellate Court in 1993, ruled in favor of granting the board, for the most part, more policy-making authority than the state superintendent.

In recent years, the board has assumed a more active interest in legislative proposals. State board members are reported to have testified on several pending proposals in recent years. With the advent of the 1994 election, the board was also part of a powerful triumvirate which included Wilson, a Republican governor, the Republican -controlled Assembly and the board—appointed by the governor.

Further strengthening the board's position was the approval of an additional $250,000 added to its budget, a measure approved last year by the governor and the Assembly, and endorsed by Superintendent Eastin. This budget will be used to expand the board's staff of one professional staff member to five, including independent legal counsel. According to the Sacramento Bee, the board's president, Yvonne Larson, claims this additional staff will help the board maintain an "'objective perspective' separate from that of Eastin and other CDE of Education officials."[24]

Legislature

Throughout most of the 1980's and early '90s the legislature was known for passing volumes of often disparate, piecemeal education laws. One long-time Senator, explained that this problem has been exacerbated over time because more and more legislators have entered the law-making arena based on very narrow, single-issue campaign promises, such as cutting taxes. Term limits have also added to the political tensions and contributed to a loss of institutional memory about why prior reforms

worked or did not work, say some. The net effect is the balkanization of any potentially potent, comprehensive and cohesive education reform effort: "With all these factions, you can't get anything to add-up," explained this legislator.

In the last two years, however, the legislature has been able to find some common ground. Considering the fact that Republicans' control of the Assembly was very narrow (there was a 40-40 tie[25] among parties in the 1994 election), there has been bipartisan agreement surrounding several sweeping proposals aimed at getting the state back on track and emphasizing the basics. Toward that end, legislators have harnessed existing state and federal categorical resources around literacy and improving the conditions for literacy by lowering class size in K-3 grades from an average of 30 to 20. Much of the leadership for these initiatives stemmed from the Senate Education Committee, chaired by Leroy Greene, a Democrat from Sacramento, who was first elected to the legislature in 1962. Greene has found room to compromise with Steve Baldwin, a Republican from La Mesa and Chair of the Assembly Education Committee and a strong supporter of choice and a back-to-basics agenda.

Not only were these initiatives unprecedented in terms of the consensus they represent among an otherwise divisive body, but they also indicate an unusual level of intervention and top-down control by state elected officials into the affairs of curriculum policy. Traditionally, this policy domain has been left in the hands of the state board, with even more discretion given to local districts and schools on how to implement what students should know and be able to do on a day-to-day basis.

Part of this new legislative intervention into state curriculum may stem from the on-going tension between legislators and the civil servants who are charged with turning words on paper into action. As one legislator explained, on the one hand, they have no choice but to hand over a policy to the superintendent and his or her staff because they are considered the "technicians." Yet, at the same time, he explained, there is always the risk that they may go too far and "extrapolate beyond the law."

Governor's Office

Since Pete Wilson became Governor in 1992, his office has played an increasingly more prominent, yet secondary role, in education reform. Prior to the 1994 election, most of Governor Wilson's education initiatives, such as a series of voucher proposals (called "opportunity scholarships") and calls to streamline the eleven volumes of the state's education code, did not go very far. The governor was successful, however, in promoting the passage of Proposition 184 in 1994, an initiative aimed at curtailing publicly-funded services for illegal aliens, including educational services, although courts have overturned most of its provisions. In 1995, Wilson was also one of a number of states who, under pressure from Steve Baldwin and other conservatives in the Assembly, threatened to return Goals 2000, School-to-Work and other federal funds because they were considered too restrictive and impinged upon local control. But Wilson has used class size reduction

as his key education policy in 1997 and hopes a student-to-teacher ratio of 20-1 will significantly improve the conditions that contribute to higher reading performance.

Although reportedly at odds with the Governor Wilson on his voucher policies, Maureen DiMarco, the former Governor's Secretary of Child Development and Education, played an important role in the push to redirect recent changes to curriciulum and assessment policy. She participated in Eastin's Mathematics and Reading Task Force and was a strong proponent, among other things, of integrating more basic skills into the curriculum frameworks and having a statewide test which could accurately measure individual student performance statewide. DiMarco contended that class size reduction could be combined with professional development and new instructional materials to create an interlocking reading initiative. She left Wilson's office in September of 1996, and has been replaced by Marion Bergeson, a former teacher, legislator and, most recently, an Orange County supervisor and long-time supporter of vouchers.

Other Key Actors

The Press. At some level, much of the impetus for the changes in curriculum policy can be attributed to the widespread reporting of NAEP scores during 1995 and the subsequent public outcry. Also important was the press' role in spreading the word about the dissatisfaction and suspicion among certain factions about the 1994 CLAS test. Major papers with widespread subscribers from Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Diego all covered these stories extensively. Since the mid-1990's, Lee Colvin, the lead education reporter for the Los Angeles Times, has written several in-depth articles a year on shifts in reading and mathematics curriculum policies at the state level.

Private Citizens. Fanning the flames surrounding the reading controversy has been the efforts of one prominent private citizen, Marion Joseph, formerly an aide to State Superintendent Wilson Riles during the 1970s. According to sources interviewed, she played and instrumental role and was very active in keeping the issue of whole language front and center in the minds of many state leaders and on editorial desks of major newspapers. So notable has been her contribution that Lee Colvin, a reporter for the Los Angeles Times, wrote a special article about her role. In that article, he describes Joseph's operating style:

> She doesn't work in public. Rather, like an unpaid lobbyist, she works the levers of power behind the scenes. She calls journalists who have written stories she believes are favorable and urges them to write more. She coaches legislative and CDE staff members on how to maneuver around bureaucratic roadblocks. She arranges for researchers to present their findings to key policy-makers. And she relies on "moles," as she calls them, to tip her off to proposed policies so she can press for language that suits her purpose.[26]

According to Colvin, Joseph was one of the first early critics of whole language and is credited with drawing attention to the problems with the state's language arts curriculum before the release of the second round of NAEP scores.

New Parent Coalitions. Also instrumental in shaping recent policy shifts have been the emergence of new coalitions of parents. Some of these parents and conservative religious groups, especially those in the central valley region of the state, near Antelope Valley, were very vocal critics of CLAS. Some board members of districts in that area were the first to refuse to administer CLAS on the basis that they felt some of the test items were too personally intrusive.[27]

Another group of parents, comprised of university professors, engineers and other mathematics and science-related professions in San Diego and the San Francisco Bay area have formed another coalition to lobby for more computation-based approaches and against constructivist-based approaches, commonly found in "new mathematics." The group, called the Honestly Open Logical Debate (HOLD) share an interactive web site. Many are concerned that their children will not have the skills they need to be competitive in college admissions.

CONCLUSION

There have been several recent studies of the evolution of curriculum reform in California that have been generally positive about its design and potential effects (Goertz, Floden, and O'Day 1996; Kirst and Yee 1994; and O'Day and Smith 1993). But trends in the 1990's threaten to undermine or at least drastically curtail the promising start begun in the 1980's in California.

Political changes have splintered state leadership and policy direction. No single entity is in charge of both mandating, developing and carrying out California curriculum reform. While old and new actors have joined forces to some extent in trying to get the state back on track after its period of experimentation with "whole language," the remedies they seek still reflect unreconciled and conflicting philosophies and solutions. This continued political and leadership volatility reduces the influence of the CDE and their curriculum reform networks. The state's strategies for building school and teacher capacity are threatened and may lack stable funding sources. Staff cutbacks in the CDE hinder its leadership, and the elected state superintendent of public instruction is now just one of a growing number of influential actors at the state level.

The curriculum reforms of the 1980's are blamed by critics as responsible for the state's dismal performance in NAEP mathematics and reading. While the cause and effect relationship between NAEP scores and the state's curricular reforms is still a matter of debate, it has only further undermined the legitimacy of the CDE because the agency is

blamed for leading the state in an ultra- constructivist direction. The pendulum seems now to be swinging back to more traditional curricular concepts. This redirection, in turn, has raised concerns among others that the state may be once again over-reacting by implementing a too pro-basics agenda which may lead to unintended consequences.

In short, California's comprehensive curriculum-driven systemic approach is at a crossroads. The new Commission to promulgate standards and assessments has the potential to set a revised course, but it is unclear, given the current debate over the content of curriculum, whether any long-standing political consensus can be reached concerning their recommendations. Assessment, rather than curricular frameworks, may become California's lead policy instrument, but the completion of a statewide assessment is several years away and presumes consensus on curriculum beforehand. Meanwhile, California's teacher capacity building initiatives, such as CSIN and CAMS, go forward without a statewide accountability component.

Also unknown is the fate of mathematics and science curriculum networks. The networks continue to move forward with training teachers, despite the political turmoil in Sacramento about what knowledge is most worth knowing in these subjects. But the networks, existing in part on ephemeral National Science Foundation (NSF) and U.S. Department of Education money and their good works is not certain to last. NSF funds, especially SSI funds have been critical to sustaining these networks, but many states with SSI funds have not been renewed by NSF.

California's historic role as a leader among states remains, but such leadership is tempered by the lessons learned of the past few years. The CLAS debacle was one of several blows to the idea that California should lead by being a trend setter in new curriculum and assessment approaches. Likewise, the watchword of curricular "balance" in mathematics and reading symbolize a less trend-setting tendency in state policy. Some state policy makers, who were originally strong proponents of creating a grass-roots professional development infrastructure to carry-out curricular reforms at the school level, are now concerned that new subject matter movements have been "hijacked" by true believers, who are hard-working and committed, but tend to implement constructivism excessively.

With these perceptions dominant, California's new era of retrenchment has led the state to reinterpret what it means to be cutting-edge[28]: to implement soundly-researched, balanced curriculum and assessment strategies with careful attention given to ensuring that the building block skills of learning are not forgotten among the mix of other skills students have to learn to thrive in an increasingly complex world. Taking their cue from California, several states across the country, including Utah, Texas, and Ohio, and even President Clinton, have placed literacy, with an emphasis on improving fundamental skills, at the top of their education reform agendas.

Implementation of new curriculum regardless of its content requires steady work. This process is aided by policy coherence and political stability. These attributes were present more in the 1980's than the 1990's. Term limits for state officials and the changing Republican versus Democratic legislative majorities adds to political turbulence. Meanwhile public distrust of state institutions--a growing sentiment--continues to erode the ability of a centralized entity to carry-out a long-term, continuous strategy for improving education.

One positive result of the close scrutiny given to state curriculum policy is that divergent factions were forced to better understand and try to distinguish between the technicalities and ideological principles underlying those policies. While there is growing consensus on looking closely at curriculum as a lever for reform, the consensus reached around a more balanced approach remains tenuous. Also uncertain is whether this new emerging consensus about how best to solve California's student performance problems, namely though state curriculum guidelines with renewed attention to balance, will actually lead to better outcomes on NAEP and other yet-to-be determined statewide measures.

ENDNOTES

[1] California tied with Louisiana and Guam, who also participated. U.S. CDE of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, (1996) *NAEP 1994 reading report card for the nation and the states.*

[2] This is one of seven case studies conducted as part of cross-state analysis of math and science reform, under a grant from the National Science Foundation (REC-9696068) entitled *Enhancing math and science instruction: A comprehensive study of the role of sState education CDE and other state agencies.* This study is due for completion in August of 1997.

[3] California Department of Education (January 1995), *Instructional resources in California: An overview of the state review and selection process, curriculum frameworks and instructional resources office*, p.1.

[4] Ibid, California CDE of Education, p.3

[5] Kirst, M, & Yee, G. (n.d.) An examinatin of the evolution of California state education reform, (Appendix A). In D. Massell, & S. Fuhrman, *Ten years of state education reform, 1983-1993: Overview with four case studies.* New Brunswick, NJ: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

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[20] Sneider, C.I. (1996, June 14). *State science guidelines & frameworks: A comparison of eight case studies.* Berkeley, CA: University of California.

[21] Connor, K., & Melendez, M. (1994, July). *Education reform briefing book: Education reform in review and emerging education issues in California, Volume I, First Edition.* Sacramento, CA: Senate Publications.

[22] Reportedly, the CDE has now hired curriculum specialists in each of its grade-level units.

[23] Trombley, W. (1990, September 16). Feud between Honig and Deukmejian Escalates. Politics: The state board of education moves to strip schools chief of control over education deparment's budget. Honig says he's being "bushwhacked." *The Times Mirror Company, Los Angeles Times.* Part A, 2, 3.

[24] Ferris, Jan. "Clout, Staffing Expand." Sacramento Bee, January 14., 1997

[25] Democrats in 1996 regained control of the Assembly.

[26] Colvin, L. (1995, November 19). Her best subject; when it comes to making schools better, Marion Joseph works overtime. Reading is her latest target. The Times Mirror Company, *Los Angeles Times.*

[27] Henry Chu, with the Los Angeles Times (10-29-95, p. B1)

[28] Colvin, L. (1995, May 9). State poised to lead U.S. in reading reform. *Los Angeles Times.*

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